



Newsletter

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Publisher

Dr. Patrick J. Shwaluk

Doctor of Chiropractic

Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician

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**Educated - Safe - Effective
Spine Care**

Many patients consider this newsletter as a reminder to come in for their monthly good spinal health check up. Now is a good time to book your "tune up" appointment.

Clinic Hours

Mon 10am - 7pm
Tues 9 am - 12pm
Wed 10am - 6pm
Thurs 3pm - 7pm
Fri 9am - 4pm
Sat 9:30 am - 12:30pm

Capalaba Business Center
Suite 8
39 Old Cleveland Rd
Capalaba QLD 4157

Phone:

(07) 3823 2282

Fax: (07) 3823 2520

Mobile: 0409878180

Email:
[chiropractor@
bytesite.com.au](mailto:chiropractor@bytesite.com.au)

The advice in this newsletter is to be used in conjunction with chiropractic care and not as a substitute to professional care.

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Stretching?

Stretching exercise have been around for centuries. Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates would not thrive today if they were not effective for more than just a blissful sense of wellbeing. Many of my patients have reported feeling better with more flexibility and less pain after regularly attending one of the above stretching classes.

In the last 100 years Western Healthcare has prescribed all manner of exercise for a host of health issues from heart disease to diabetes and back pain. Modern research has been able to analyze when and why some exercise are effective and when they are not. We know everybody is a bit different and that what works for one person may be ineffective or cause harm for the next. Your chiropractor can advise you on how, when and why to stretch different parts of the body for optimum therapeutic and lifestyle outcomes.

I commonly prescribe the following exercises to patients as an adjunct to chiropractic spinal manipulation and dry needling / western acupuncture for the management of low back and hip pain. It is advisable to stretch all body parts after they have received a massage, dry needling and most chiropractic manipulations. None of the stretching exercises in this newsletter are new. They have been around for centuries because they are effective for many pain conditions and desired lifestyle goals.

Tight / Sore Low Back?

Stretching is an essential part of managing low back pain. Knowing which stretches to do is also essential. There are many schools of thought on low back stretches. The McKenzie school advises primarily extension stretches, figure 1, while the Williams school advises flexion and rotation stretches, figure 2. Some people require stretching in both flexion and extension. The wrong stretches can aggravate the cause of the pain and make the symptoms a whole lot worse. **As a rule of thumb, if any of the following stretches make your pain worse - stop doing the stretches and consult your chiropractor.** On the other hand, if you feel better after doing a particular stretch it is worth repeating on a regular basis.



Figure 1

The above exercise stretches the low back into extension. I prescribe this exercises primarily for individuals who have injured the discs in their low back from stooping, bending forward and lifting. This stretch is also a good antidote for back pain from sitting for long periods of time. I recommend doing a few sets of 10 - 30 repetitions of this stretch every day.

Lumbar flexion stretches are good for injuries of the facet joints and muscles of the low back. figure 2 A-D. It is safest to do these stretches while laying on your back and pulling your knees up to the chest, figure 2A. You can progress to stretching forward while sitting in a chair, figure 2B, if you need a stronger stretch. Rotational stretches of the lumbar spine can be achieved by twisting the hip and pelvis to the side while laying on your back with one knee, figure 2C, or both knees bent, figure 2D. Gently stretch in each position 3 - 10 times every few hours and hold each stretch for 10 seconds.

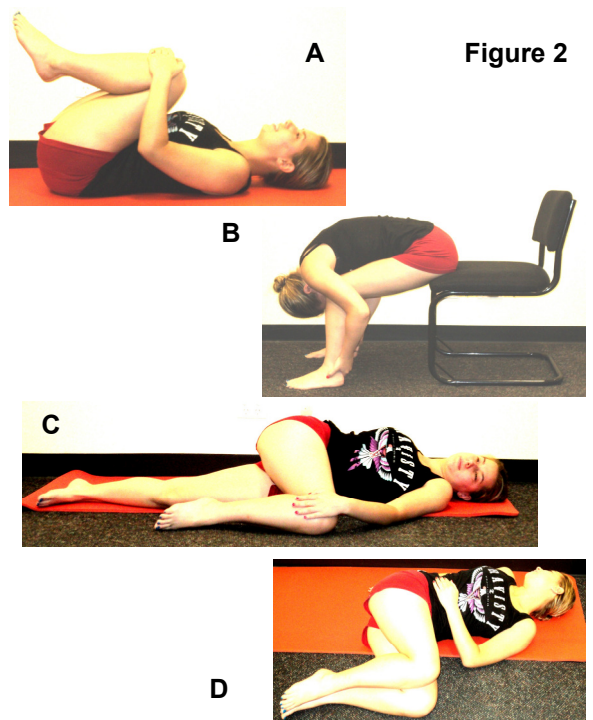


Figure 2



HOW AGGRESSIVELY DO I STRETCH? Stretches are not meant to hurt. All stretches should feel like a gentle mild stretch. If the stretch is painful you are stretching too hard, for too long or in the wrong direction. Back off on the intensity of the stretch and consult your chiropractor.

HOW LONG DO I HOLD A PARTICULAR STRETCH? The duration of the stretch depends on the tissue you are attempting to effect. **Short duration stretches, 5 - 10 seconds, are useful to relax the belly of the muscle.** This is the portion of the muscle that has the capacity to contract. **Long-duration stretches, 3 - 20 minutes, are useful for stretching tendons, ligaments, fascia and scar tissue.** These are soft tissues that do not have the ability to contract at will. Short duration stretches have no impact on these tissues.

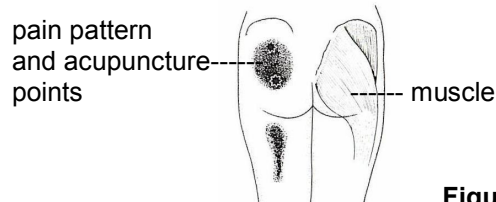
Tight Buttocks?

Tight buttocks are a common cause of hip and low back pain. If one or a few of the buttock muscles are tight they will alter gait while walking or running causing compensatory / abnormal motion patterns in the spine and pelvis. Tight buttock muscles can interfere with your ability to get up out of a chair. You may experience hip pain while sitting and sleeping. Rest alone does nothing for tight muscles that need to be stretched or treated with manipulation or dry needling.

The three most popular buttock stretches are noted below. They can be done individually if only one muscle is tight or all three can be done if required. Both sides should be stretched for comparative flexibility / tightness. Ideally the muscles should be relaxed and of equal length on both sides.

Typically **each stretch is held for 10 seconds then released for a second or two to re-set the length of the belly of the muscle. Each stretch should be repeated 3 - 10x, one to 3x/day.** There are many variations of these stretches. **Stretches to lengthen scar tissue can be held for up to 20 minutes.** If any of the exercises cause pain in your hip, back or knee talk to your chiropractor to discuss your progress and / or ask for an alternative stretch.

Figure 3 is a stretch for the **gluteus maximus** muscle. This is the biggest and most superficial muscle of the buttock.



Stretch by pulling the knee to the shoulder / arm pit on the same side as the tight muscle.

The gluteus medius lays deep to the gluteus maximus muscle. Tightness in this muscle is a common cause of tendonitis and / or bursitis of

the hip. Figure 4 is a stretch for the **gluteus medius** muscle.

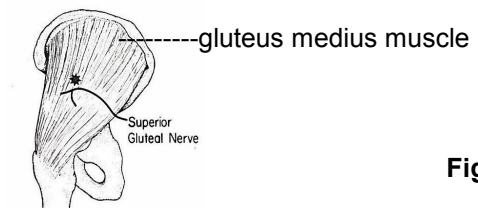


Figure 4



Stretch this muscle by pulling the knee to the opposite shoulder / arm pit.

The **piriformus** muscle lays deep to the gluteus medius and gluteus maximus muscles. Figure 5 A & B are stretches for the piriformus muscle.

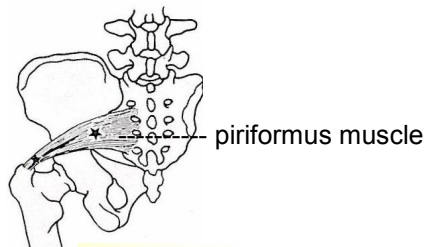


Figure 5



Stretch this muscle by flexing the hip to 90 degrees, then rotating the hip inwards to 90 degrees, then pulling the hip and knee to the chest as illustrated in the figure 5A. This stretch can be assisted by pulling the opposite knee to the chest, figure 5B.

It is important to stretch after an acupuncture, massage, chiropractic treatment or a work out. Remember, if any of these stretches cause pain - stop doing them and consult your chiropractor.

Sorry for any inconvenience but the office will be closed for 9 days between Monday the 17th and Wednesday the 26th of February 2014.

Newsletters

Due to the cost of printing and postage we prefer to email the newsletters whenever possible. If you have received this newsletter in the mail and have an email address we would appreciate it if you would send us an email to: chiropractor@bytesite.com.au and ask us to email future newsletters to you. The newsletters are in pdf format and can easily be saved to your computer. Thank you for your consideration.

NONE, ONE, SOME, OR ALL?

Many people never stretch. Some will stretch one or some of their muscles when they feel pain and tightness / stiffness. Others do full body stretches routinely. If your muscles are too tight / out of balance they inadvertently apply abnormal compression forces to the joints predisposing them to pain and degenerative arthritis. In other words, doing these stretches will help prevent hip degeneration and surgical replacement if you do them regularly.